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FOR ACTION

UNICEF INFORMATION AND PUBLICATION POLICY

SUMMARY

The present report was prepared in response to Executive Board decision 1996/15 (E/ICEF/1996/12/Rev.1), which requested the Executive Director to present an information and publication policy, in the context of the mandate of UNICEF and the results of the Communication Project Team of the Management Excellence Programme.

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* E/ICEF/1997/13.

INTRODUCTION

1. In decision 1996/15 (E/ICEF/1996/12/Rev.1), the Executive Board requested the Executive Director to present an information and publication policy. The present report presents an outline of that policy for discussion by the Board at the 1997 annual session, and will be followed by a more comprehensive report at the third regular session in September 1997.

I. PUBLICATIONS

2. Publications are an essential part of UNICEF programme advocacy and fund-raising efforts worldwide. They provide a comprehensive presentation of UNICEF policies and strategies for children. Decision makers, development experts, academics and research institutions use UNICEF publications for information on children's issues. The organization-wide editorial and research work carried out for major print publications feeds the overall information programme and provides material for use through such other communication channels as radio, television, print media and the Internet.

3. The UNICEF publication programme is decentralized, in keeping with the decentralized nature of all communication efforts. A range of publications is produced by headquarters, the International Child Development Centre (ICDC), regional and country offices and National Committees for UNICEF. Headquarters publications, produced with policy direction from the Executive Office, articulate corporate policy on priority issues for global advocacy, and provide material for experience exchange and fund-raising. ICDC publications draw upon the research carried out at the Centre and with other international research institutions. Regional and field offices publish information on national or regional child-related issues for use by national Governments, non-governmental organizations and leading political and religious organizations.

4. The consolidation of the management of all headquarters publications into the Division of Communication in 1996 has resulted in a rationalization of publications and an overall reduction in related costs. To improve further the coordination, quality control and cost-effectiveness of the publication programme, a Publications Review Committee (PRC) was established in 1995. The PRC is chaired by a Deputy Executive Director and meets on an as-needed basis to review proposals for publications from offices in New York, Geneva, Florence and Copenhagen. The PRC sets priorities according to programme needs, curtails ad hoc publication proposals and establishes the publication work plan within an approved budget.

5. It has been proposed that the regional management teams establish regional publication review committees. Also, all headquarters, regional and field-level expenditure on publications and other information materials will be the subject of detailed analysis in the preparation of the 1988-1989 biennial budget. This will give UNICEF a more detailed account of the cost and number of publications produced throughout the organization.

6. Major publications which support global advocacy for children are the State of the World's Children report (SOWCR) and the Progress of Nations (PON). In keeping with the broader mandate for UNICEF work, SOWCR has become a forceful

advocate for child rights. PON monitors follow-up of the goals for children for the year 2000 through the use of league tables comparing, country by country, the progress achieved for children and women in such areas as health, nutrition, education and family planning. UNICEF has recently begun a research programme to monitor the effectiveness of the flagship publications in getting key issues on the global media agenda.

7. Many publications are produced jointly or in cooperation with other United Nations bodies. This allows UNICEF knowledge of children's issues to be incorporated into the overall United Nations development agenda. For example, Facts for Life, co-published with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Health Organization (WHO), is a landmark health communication initiative. To date, 17 million copies have been printed in 215 languages.

8. The distinct mandates of UNICEF and other United Nations agencies and their collaboration on issues of common concern (e.g., between UNICEF and the International Labour Organisation on child labour, or UNICEF and WHO on health issues), avoids duplication and ensures that each agency's publications reinforce the messages of the others. The Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), chaired by the Department of Public Information, ensures that duplication is avoided by keeping members informed of each agency's agenda. An increased effort to coordinate public outreach and launch plans for major publications is now being reviewed by JUNIC.

II. THE INTERNET

9. The UNICEF headquarters site on the World Wide Web was established in 1994. As of January 1997, eight field offices and seven National Committees for UNICEF were maintaining their own sites. The main UNICEF site includes pages on "Information about UNICEF"; a news line with press releases; "Child Rights", with key information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the full text of major publications; "UNICEF Worldwide", a brief description of all offices; "Support UNICEF", for online contributions to the organization's work; and a special UNICEF search engine. It also features "Voices of Youth", an interactive site which allows young people from all over the world to engage in dialogue about social issues.

10. The use and scope of the Internet is still emerging and the UNICEF policy in this area should also recognize the evolving nature of this new medium. One of its characteristics is the elimination of geographic distance: information provided at any location is instantly available globally. The decentralized nature of the medium paradoxically requires exceptional global coordination for an organization such as UNICEF. On the Internet, sites for all UNICEF offices or National Committees will appear as "UNICEF" and the risk of confused images and messages is obvious. To provide overall policy and guidance, in 1996 the Executive Director established the Electronic Information Committee (EIC), which is chaired by the Director of the Division of Communication and has cross-divisional membership. In July 1996, EIC issued guidelines to all offices on a common approach to both the design and content of Web pages. EIC oversees adherence to these guidelines, thus avoiding possible duplication.

11. The Internet's challenge in relation to linguistic balance was highlighted by the Executive Board in decision 1996/15 (E/ICEF/1996/12/Rev.1). The UNICEF policy has been to expand the original English version of its central site and present materials in French and Spanish. In 1997, SOWCR, PON, the UNICEF Annual Report, "UNICEF at a Glance" and "UNICEF Facts and Figures" will be made available on the Web site in English, French and Spanish. There will also be search engines in these languages. It is also proposed to launch French and Spanish versions of "Voices of Youth". The Mission Statement is presented in all six official United Nations languages. As of January 1997, Web pages in several languages, including French and Spanish, were being maintained by National Committees (Belgium, Finland, Japan, Korea and the Netherlands) and field offices (the Americas and Caribbean Regional Offices and the country offices in Argentina, Brazil and Peru).

III. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND PUBLICATION POLICY

12. The policies guiding print and electronic publishing are a subset of those guiding the UNICEF information and communication policy. Principles and guidelines for the organization's communication work are captured in the UNICEF Information Manual, which covers such topics as selecting and targeting audiences to ensure maximum outreach, working with the media in emergencies, dealing with radio and television, launching global advocacy publications and conferences and how to support fund-raising activities. Details on these policies will be included in the more comprehensive paper on the information and publication policy being prepared for the Executive Board's third regular session of 1997.